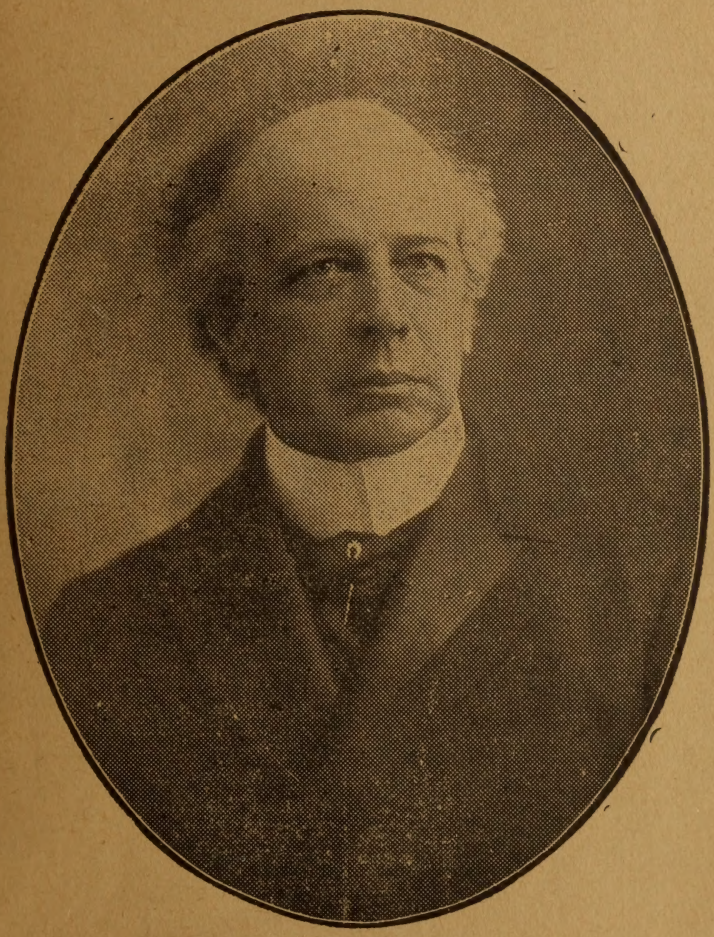
The Canadian Navy



SPEECH BY

SIR WILFRID LAURIER

In Reply to Amendments of Mr. R. L. Borden and Mr. Monk, Nov. 29th, 1910.

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Sir WILFRID LAURIER. Mr. Speaker, I must crave the indulgence of the House, having already spoken in this interminable debate, if I rise again further to trespass upon its patience. But occupying the position I do at the head of the government, perhaps it will not be considered amiss if I again rise for the purpose of stating the view of the government on the new phase introduced in this debate by the two amendments which have been moved by the hon. leader of the opposition (Mr. R. L. Borden) and by the hon. member for Jacques Cartier (Mr. Monk). The hon. member for North Grey (Mr. Middlebro) will pardon me, I am sure, if I do not attempt to reply to the very interesting speech which he has just delivered, and there is a very good reason for it. He has spoken of everything except the amendments before the House. He has travelled far afield; I do not blame him for it. He has gone from east to west and from west to east again, he has spoken of ancient history and of modern history, but he has said never a word about the amendments which we are now to dispose of. The amendment which has been moved by my hon. friend from Jacques Cartier is quite in accord with the position he took last year, and it will be sufficient for me to read both amendments to justify what I now say. Last year my hon. friend met the Bill which was introduced with an amendment in these words :

"This House, while declaring its unalterable devotion to the British Crown, is of opinion, that the Bill now submitted for its consideration changes the relations of Canada with the empire and ought in consequence to be submitted to the Canadian people in order to obtain at once the nation's opinion by means of a plebiscite."

This year my hon. friend has expressed the same idea in somewhat more condensed language, by moving :

"The House regrets that the speech fom the Throne gives no indication whatever of the intention of the government to consult the people on its naval policy and the general question of the contribution of Canada to impeial amaments."

Barring the fact that this amendment has dropped the idea of a plebiscite, there is not much substanial difference between my hon. friend's motion of last year and his motion of this year. Perhaps my hon. friend would permit me to offer him my compliments on the fact that in this matter at all events he has been somewhat consistent since the question was introduced into the House. To say of any man that he has been consistent is not paying him a great compliment; but, small as it is, I offer it to my hon. friend, because after all it is something, considering the surroundings in which he is placed, where nothing has been more remarkable than the changes in the views of his friends which have occurred with something like lightning rapidity. But what shall I say of the amendment of my hon. friend the leader of the opposition? All I have to say of it is that it is the last chapter in the history of the variations of my hon. friend on this matter. I might refer to the many somersaults performed by my hon. friend on this question since it came before this House; but I will not do it for the reason given to me in the town of Melville last year why the houses in that town had not been counted. Melville is a new town which has sprung up within the last two years on the line of the Transcontinental railway. It has a population now estimated at 500 three banks four churches, and one large school with four teachers. I asked one of the enterprising citizens I met there, one of the new settlers, one of those typical western men in whose breast hope always springs eternal, how many buildings there were in the town of Melville ? His answer was: "I could not tell you, sir; we never counted them, because if we undertook to do so, by the time we reached the end of the operation there would be so many new buildings that we would be out of reckoning." That is the reason I do not count the turns made by my hon.

friend the leader of the opposition; I would not undertake such a task. Perhaps I might simply skim over the subject and show to what degree of inconsistency a large party hungering for office can descend. This question which we have now again before us, which occupied a large part of last session, came in concrete from for the first time in the session of 1909, upon a motion introduced by my hon. friend from North Toronto (Hon. Geo. E. Foster). The motion has been more than once quoted, but as it formed the basis of the question which we are now discussing, it will bear being repeated again. My hon. friend moved as follows :

"That in the opinion of this House, in view of her great and varied resources, of her geographical position and national environments, and of that spirit of self-help and self-respect which alone befits a strong and growing people, Canada should no longer delay in assuming her share of the responsibility and financial burden incident to the suitable protection of her exposed coast line and great seaports."

Mark the words: "Canada should no longer delay." For a long space of time this subject had been before the House. The question of a Canadian navy to guard our shores and commerce has been more than once brought to the attention of this House. It has been discussed in numerous meetings and in innumerable newspaper articles, and therefore my hon. friend from North Toronto (Mr. Foster) was simply following the trend of public opinion when he brought it to the attention of this House. When he last brought it up, it did not meet any adverse comment but was accepted by everybody. Not a voice of dissent was heard, not even the voice of the hon. member for Jacques Cartier (Mr. Monk) who was present on that occasion, who heard the discussion but who could not bring his courage to the sticking point, and oppose the resolution. My hon. friend has told us subsequently that he left the House and was not present when the vote was taken. Whether he left the House to shirk the vote or for a more praiseworthy motive, does not matter; on that occasion everybody in this House agreed to the proposition, and I must say that there was no one so enthusiastic in its support as my hon. friend the leader of the Conservative party. He was not satisfied with the resolution but wanted immediate action to be taken. I myself was in favour of the motion, but I thought the language rather vague and deemed it my duty to put it in more concrete form. I moved an amendment which I shall not quote in its entirety, but there is one paragraph, which is the kernel of the whole thing, and which I shall read to the House. That paragraph in my amendment was this :

"The House will cordially approve of any necessary expenditure designed to promote the organization of a Canadian naval service in co-operation with and in close relation to the imperial navy along the lines suggested by the Admiralty at the last Imperial Conference and in full sympathy with the view that the naval supremacy of Great Britain is essential to the security of commerce, the safety of the empire and the peace of the world."

My hon. friend agreed to this — not a word to be taken out of it; but the only fault he had to find was that the language was not sufficiently definite. He was not satisfied that we should provide for the organization of the naval service, but instead that we should provide for its immediate organization. Not an hour, not a day was to be lost; and following his suggestion, we inserted the word 'speedy.' There was no question then of consulting the people or having a plebiscite or a general election and inviting the people to tell us what we should do. My hon. friend did not want us to wait a moment to consult anybody but insisted that we should go on immediately. He was in that frame of mind when the session closed. After the session he went to England and there presented to the people of England the motion which had been passed by this parliament on the necessity of an immediate organization of a Canadian service. After his tour of England and almost on the same day that he landed in Halifax, he spoke again on the same subject in the same way as he had done before and depicted all the advantages which would accrue to the country at large, and Nova Scotia and Halifax in particular, from the immediate organization of a Canadian navy. On the 14th of October, my hon. friend spoke at Halifax, as follows :

"One governing principle at least should control, namely, that out of our materials, by our own labour and by the instructed skill or our own people, any necessary provision for our own naval defence should be made. In this connection may we not hope that there shall be given a stimulus and an encouragement to the ship-building industry of which Canada has long been lacking? To-day should be Nova Scotia's opportunity in this regard. Providence has endowed this province with the material, with the men and with the maritime situation which are essential for developing a scheme of naval defence and protection."

There was no suggestion there that we should consult the people. Providence itself had decided that the navy was in the interests of Nova Scotia.

But my hon. friend, after he had landed in Halifax, became aware of certain

speeches which had been made by certain of his followers, many of whom I see now before me, in which they had taken a position absolutely different from the one they had voted for a few months ago, on the 26th of March, 1909. It is of record that many gentlemen on the other side, after the close of the session of 1909, after they had voted for the motion introduced by myself in amendement to the resolution of my hon. friend from North Toronto (Mr. Foster)—I except of course my hon. friend from Jacques Cartier (Mr. Monk) who did not vote—went about the country and made speeches against this policy. My hon. friend (Mr. R. L. Borden) is no doubt too close a student of our political history not to have been aware of these speeches, and I do not think I am making a violent supposition when I suppose that many of these gentlemen came to him and told him that there was some embarrassment for the government in that policy and that he had better withdraw the support he had given it. Our mother Eve was tempted by one only, I do not know how many tempted my hon. friend, but in any event he proved himself a true son of Eve. He succumbed to the tempter, but it was somewhat embarrassing to him perhaps to select a ground upon which he should fall and find reason for going back upon the policy he voted for only a few months before. There was an expedient ready at hand, namely, the motion of my hon. friend from Jacques Cartier (Mr. Monk) that the people should be consulted. Such as it was, my hon. friend had some difficulty in swallowing it, but he was equal to the occasion. He accepted the idea that there should be an appeal to the people before proceeding with the policy, but he larded and buttered that idea on one side with the proposition that the policy which we had introduced was ill-advised and dangerous; and on the other side he larded and buttered it with the statement that we should in the inception, while at work consulting the people, send to England the price of two Dreadnoughts, $25,000.000. Thus larded, he brought in an amendment supporting the policy of the hon. member for Jacques Cartier (Mr. Monk) swallowed it without any hesitation, and with it his convictions and conduct of a few months before. He moved his motion and it was not accepted. The hon. member for Jacques Cartier moved his motion which was also rejected and the Bill was passed. Then, according to all parliamentary usage, the question was at an end, so far as legislation was concerned. But it did not follow that it was at an end in so far as opposition to the policy was concerned. That could go on. It was the right and privilege of the opposition to fight against that policy in any capacity they pleased. My hon. friend the leader of the opposition, who is, as everybody knows, a good parliamentarian, understood this. When, at the opening of this session he spoke on the address, he reminded us of the friendly advice he had given us last year, and which we had not accepted. But he did not go further; he did not move an amendment. But, immediately afterward, arose my hon. friend from Jacques Cartier (Mr. Monk), the apostle of stagnation and negation. And he moved his amendment, repeating, as I stated, the motion he had made before. His amendment is in these words :

"The House regrets that the speech from the Throne gives no indication whatever of the intention of the government to consult the people on its naval policy and the general question of the contribution of Canada to imperial armaments."

Now, I am told—I do not know whether the statement is true—hon. members opposite can tell me whether it is or not— that when this motion was moved there was quite a feeling of embarrassment in the ranks of His Majesty's opposition. Last year a similar motion moved by my hon. friend from Jacques Cartier had gathered a few votes, not only of the Nationalists, but of the Conservatives—of the faithful. And I am told that immediately there was an intimation that, unless there was another amendment moved a good many gentlemen on the other side would vote, as they had voted last year, with the hon. member for Jacques Cartier. That would not have suited the view of my hon. friend (Mr. R. L. Borden) and his friends; they did not want to appear to have any alliance with the Nationalist party. Therefore, a new amendment was devised by my hon. friend, not differing materially from the amendment of my hon. friend from Jacques Cartier, but doctored a little to make it more palatable. This is the amendment of my hon. friend, (Mr. R. L. Borden.) :

"We beg to assure Your Excellency of the unalterable attachment and devotion of the people of Canada to the British Crown and of their desire and intention to fulfil all just responsibilities devolving upon this country as one of the nations of the empire. We desire, however, to express our regret that Your Excellency's gracious speech gives no indication whatever of any intention on the part of Your Excellency's advisers to consult the people on the naval policy of Canada."

Between the amendment of my hon. friend from Jacques Cartier and the amendment of my hon. friend the leader of the opposition there is not much difference; there is enough, however, to mark a line of cleavage, so that gentlemen on the other side may say they have no relation whatever with the Nationalists. My hon. friend has told us and has reiterated, and my hon. friend from North Grey (Mr. Middlebro) a moment ago was careful to repeat so that it might be

made known and sent broadcast, that there is no alliance whatever between His Majesty's opposition, the loyal party of Canada, and the Nationalist party. Nobody pretended or believed, in fact nobody ever thought that there was between my hon. friend the leader of the opposition and his party on the one side, and my hon. friend from Jacques Cartier and his party on the other side a treaty of alliance solemnly signed by plenipotentiaries with all the rules of the protocol. Nobody believed that —there is no necessity for it; a wink is quite sufficient.

Henceforth the naval policy of the government, a policy which I thought at one time would have the support of all Canadians—I am sorry I made a mistake; I presumed too much on the patriotism of these hon. gentlemen on the other side—will be attacked in Quebec and in the other provinces on the basis of the same resolution, that there must be an appeal to the people but on very different arguments in Quebec and in the other provinces. In Quebec the policy will be attacked, as it has been attacked by the hon. gentleman from Jacque Cartier and his friends, on the ground that it is an imperial policy; in Ontario and the other English-speaking provinces it will be attacked on the ground that it is a separatist measure. The government will be attacked from the right; it will be attacked from the left. But the object will be the same—the destruction of the government. There will not be a treaty of alliance —there is none. But, should these tactics succeed and the government be defeated, both the parties sitting there will be at the death falling upon each other's necks, kissing, embracing and hugging each other in the very ecstacy of delight that at last the government has been defeated. There would be a jolly time, to be followed, however, by a jolly row. For the time would come to divide the spoils, to form a government, to define a policy and to determine whether the Tory lion was to swallow the Nationalist lamb, or the Nationalist lamb to swallow the Tory lion. My hon. friend opposite is already beginning to endure the punishment which will follow his course. That punishment is indicated in the altered tone of the Nationalist press toward him. It has been to the credit of my hon. friend that, hitherto, he has had the honour of the insults of the Nationalist press. Henceforth he will have the insult of Nationalist praise.

Such is the position we have to deal with at the present time. Let me, therefore, examine the two amendments which have been presented. These amendments are a very lame and impotent conclusion to the violent language with which our policy has been attacked both in Quebec and in the other provinces. If that policy needed justification for its strength, its wisdom, its opportuneness, it would be found in the tameness of the amendments that have been proposed. If my hon. friend from Jacques Cartier were convinced that this policy is the first step to conscription, that it is going to tear children from their mothers and is going to send Canadians upon all the seas of the world, to be disembowelled by German shells, or killed by Russian bullets, or Japanese shots, would his proposal be simply to refer such a monstrous policy to the people? No, he would say: Down with such a policy!—we will oppose it; we will never submit to it. If the leader of the opposition (Mr. R. L. Borden) were satisfied, as he has alleged on the floor of this House, and as his friends have alleged here and elsewhere, that this policy is not only ill-advised, but that it is dangerous, that it is a step leading to separation, would he and his friends be content to send that question to the people to pronounce upon it ? Would not they denounce and oppose such a policy ?

My hon. friend from East Grey (Mr. Sproule) in the speech which he delivered, which was very temperate in tone, and to which I listened with great interest, gave to the House a long list of our delinquencies—and according to the hon. gentleman they are many, indeed. One of them was the policy which we introduced in 1898 for the building of a railway to the Yukon. My hon. friend forgot to say that it was not the policy of his party to leave that question to the people, they combatted it and succeed in killing it in the Senate. When in 1903 we introduced a measure for the building of the Transcontinental railway, although the question had never been brought before the attention of the country, still the opposition did not attack that Bill simply by stating that the question should be referred to the people; my hon. friend and his friends attacked that policy from the first, they opposed that railway from the moment it was introduced. The amendments I have quoted to the House asking that an appeal should be made to the people before the policy is proceeded with are simply subterfuge to escape responsibility. Hon. gentlemen know that if there is, in some sections of the country, a sentiment of hostility to that policy, caused by its not being known as it shall be known in a few years, there are on the other side many sections of the community amongst the best informed of the whole population of the country who are in favour of it, and therefore they take this middle course of not attacking it outright themselves but asking to have it referred to the people so that the people may pronounce on it, so that they may afterwards form their opinion not on their own consciences, but upon the consciences of the electors.

Let me go further and deeper into this question. Gentlemen on the opposite side of the House, as I know from past experience, have not the same opinion that I

have on the autonomy of the young nations of the British Empire. I remember that my hon. friend from North Toronto (Mr. Foster) on a previous occasion said that we had heard to much of autonomy in this House. I have heard the same remark made elsewhere, that we give too much attention to autonomy. I answer my hon. friend from Toronto, I take the ground here, that the very basis on which the British Empire rests, the very basis upon which alone it can be maintained, is the autonomy of all its component parts. When the early Canadian reformers asked for this country the privilege of being administered by responsible government, they built better than they knew. It was they who laid the foundation upon which the British Empire now rests. Conceive if you can what would be the condition of Canada to-day, of Australia, of New Zealand, of South Africa, if these countries had continued to be governed as they were governed before from Downing street under a centralized government. Does any one believe that Canada would have reached, under such a system, the position she now occupies, covering a whole continent, with a population of 8,000,000, with a revenue of $100,000,000, and a trade of $700,000,000 and more, the home of a people of different origin, happy and contented? Does any one believe that Australia would have attained the position which it has now attained, in which it is becoming stronger and stronger every day, and becoming the leading nation in the southern Pacific ocean? Does any one believe that New Zealand would have reached the position it has, or that the greatest wonder which I have seen accomplished under British institutions, that is the unification of South Africa would have been carried out successfully? This is the basis upon which the British Empire rests. Every nation within it—and I hope in saying so, I do not shock my hon. friend from Victoria (Mr. Hughes), who I notice, always takes exception when we speak of Canada as a nation. I am sure he will not complain any more in view of the amendment of my hon. friend the leader of the opposition, in which he uses this very expression:

"We beg to assure Your Excellency of the unalterable attachment and devotion of the people of Canada to the British Crown and of their desire and intention to fulfil all just responsibilities devolving upon this country as one of the nations of the empire."

My hon. friend is corrected not by me, but by an authority which I am sure he will not dispute, and henceforth he will agree that we are a nation.

Mr. HUGHES. Of the empire.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. Exactly, I say nothing to the contrary. We are a nation of the empire, and the British Empire to-day comprises a galaxy of young nations. My hon. friend will agree that it is part of the duty of a free nation to provide for its defence. No one in this House will refute that sentiment, at least in words, however much it may be refuted in action. It is the part of a young and free country such as we are to-day, nation and free, to provide for its own defence. That was at all events the attitude which was taken many years ago by British statesmen with the full concurrence of Canadian statesmen. As soon as confederation had been adopted in 1867 the British authorities put it upon us to defend Canada, our own country, and this was assented to by Sir John Macdonald, by Sir George Etienne Cartier, by all the men of that day, as a duty which naturally devolved upon us. In the early days of the 19th century Great Britain had undertaken the defence of Canada. She had erected strong fortifications at Quebec, she had erected fortifications at Halifax, and later on when British Columbia came into the confederation, she placed a naval station at Esquimalt and also established a naval station at Halifax. But, the British nation put it on us that we should provide for our own defence and relieve the British taxpayer of the necessity of himself providing for the defence of our country. We accepted that duty, we undertook to garrison Quebec and Halifax and Esquimalt. The British nation then withdrew their naval stations from Halifax and Esquimalt and we have now undertaken to do what was done by the British nation, that is to say keep a naval reserve at Esquimalt and at Halifax. Will any one tell me that these fortifications which have been built by Great Britain at Quebec and at Halifax should remain unmanned and should be allowed to fall into decay? Is there not the same necessity today of providing for our defence as there was then? Will any one tell me that these naval stations at Halifax and Esquimalt are to remain untenanted and unmanned? Sir, whatever may be the view of hon. gentlemen opposite, our policy is that it is our duty to replace by Canadian troops and Canadian seamen, the British troops and British seamen who have been removed from Canadian soil.

I would ask the hon. member for North Toronto (Mr. Foster) if that was not the very thing he had in mind when years ago he moved that the time had come when Canada should no longer delay to assume her proper share of the responsibility and financial burden incident to the suitable protection of our exposed coast line and great seaports? But sir, there is more. I alluded to that two or three days ago in the debate on the address. I called the attention of the House to the fact that we are all the time extending our population northward and westward. We are build-

ing a railway from the interior to the Hudson Bay shores, a railway the terminus of which will be at least ten thousand miles from Halifax. We are building a transcontinental railway the terminus of which will be at least 600 miles from Esquimalt. Will any one tell me that we can afford to leave these isolated stations without any protection? Sir, whatever may be the verdict or the opinion which in a moment of passion or excitement may be pronounced, in the calmer moments my hon. friends opposite will come to the conclusion that we have to protect these distant shores either by fortification or by ships. Now, if that work is to be done, if that duty is to be undertaken, it can be undertaken only by one of two parties, either by England or Canada, and our answer is that Canada must do it. That is my answer to the motion moved by my hon. friend from Jacques Cartier (Mr. Monk) and the motion moved by my hon. friend the leader of the opposition (Mr. R. L. Borden).

Let me go still farther and if possible let the discussion touch the very rock bottom of the matter with which we are now concerned. Let us not wink at the facts, but, if possible, let us argue this question without any prejudices at all in the light of the duty which we owe to ourselves as a nation and which we owe to Great Britain as a part of the British Empire. A school has lately arisen in Great Britain which has quite a number of disciples in this country, the object of which has been to draw the young nations of the empire, Canada in particular, into the armaments of England, into the maelstrom of militarism in which England is engaged as one of the great powers of Europe. We have always, on this side of the House, fought against that idea. We have always maintained that the conditions of England and the conditions of Canada are so different that at this time it cannot be thought of at all events. I do not speak as to the future although I hope the day will never come. But, at this time it cannot be thought of that Canada, a young nation with everything to create, shall be drawn into the abyss of this expensive militarism. My hon. friends on the other side of the House have always been coquetting with this question, and they have always pointed to the adoption of the idea and, in so far as they could, they have pronounced in favour of it. In so far as the present government is concerned the matter came up in a concrete form at the conference of 1902. There, we had the proposal made to us in so many words that we should equip and maintain a body of troops for imperial service and make a yearly contribution to the navy. I shall not quote at length from the Blue-books on this subject. I prefer to take the resume of the proceedings of the conference of 1902 which was made last session by my hon. friend from North Toronto (Mr. Foster) for which I complimented him at the time and which I think I might read as a very fair resume of what took place at that conference. I will quote the proposal which was made to us by the Secretary of State for War in the very language of my hon. friend from North Toronto and I ask hon. gentlemen on the other side to listen to this. My hon. friend said, speaking of the conference of 1902:

"With reference to military defence, no definite conclusion was reached at this conference. The Secretary of State for War and the Premier of New Zealand suggested an imperial reserve, that is a special body of troops ear-marked for imperial service, and held ready in the different colonies for emergencies when they arose. Cape Colony and Natal agreed to that principle; Canada and Australia thought it best to raise the standard of the training of the general body of the forces, leaving it for the colonies to determine the nature and the extent of the assistance when an emergency arose; and both argued that in that way you would avoid any jealousy that might arise from there being two kinds of militia, so to speak, one a special reserve marked for a special purpose, and the other thrown alongside of them, the general militia of Canada. In that respect I am not at all saying that I do not think the position taken by Australia and Canada was a proper position. I am not here to comment on this to-day, but simply to make the review."

The main proposal that was made to us, as defined by the hon. member for North Toronto, was that we should equip a body of troops, ear-mark it and place it under the immediate command of the Secreary of State for War for imperial purposes. Then, speaking of naval defence, my hon. friend thus referred to the proposal which was made to us:

"Sir John Forrest, Minister of Defence of Australia, the First Lord of the Admiralty, who I think at that time was the Right Hon. the Earl of Selborne, prepared a paper which was presented to the conference. The general line of his paper was that in the study of defence it is the best defence which is in a position to become aggressive when an emergency arises, that there was need not only of money but of man contribution; he would like to see each colony represented in the navy with vessels and with men from the colony. He thought the allocation in peace time would be easy, but all through his memorandum he stood unflinchingly for one control, absolute in case of war and in case of emergency. Some discussion took place but not very much at this stage and it was then decided that the conference should seperate and that each colony should

have its own conference with the Admiralty and that then a report should be made to conference as to what had been agreed upon."

Then he went on to say that Canada did not agree to either of these two proposals, and I have again to repeat that we did not agree and we placed on record our opinion as to what our policy should be. The question has often been referred to but it bears repetition. It is well that I should state what we did on that occasion and what was the policy to which we assented, which we declared and which has been ever since, for the last eight years, before the Canadian people. We stated that :

"The Canadian ministers regret that they have been unable to assent to the suggestions made by Lord Selborne respecting a navy, and by Mr. St. John Broderick respecting the army. The ministers desire to point out that their objections arise not so much from the expense involved, as from a belief that the acceptance of the proposals would entail an important departure from the principle of colonial government. Canada values highly the measure of local independence which has been granted her from time to time by the imperial authorities, and which has been so productive of beneficial results, both as respects the material progress of the country and the strengthening of the ties that bind it to the mother land. . . . At present Canadian expenditures for defence services are confined to the military side. The Canadian government are prepared to consider the naval system of defence as well. On the sea coast of Canada there is a large number of men admirably qualified to form a naval reserve, and it is hoped that at an early date a system may be devised which will lead to the training of these men and to the making of their services available for defence in time of need."

I beg to call the attention of the House to the fact that we refused to be drawn into the position which was asked of us that we should have a military force under the direct control of the war office and we insisted on maintaining our autonomy in this respect as in everything else. The same question came up in 1907 upon a motion moved by Dr. Smartt of Cape Colony, to which the hon. member for North Grey (Mr. Middlebro) has just alluded. It is well that I should be permitted to quote again the motion of Dr. Smartt, and now you will have the reason why we did not agree to it. The motion of Dr. Smartt was in these words

"That this conference, recognizing the vast importance of the services rendered by the navy to the defence of the empire and the protection of its trade, and the paramount importance of continuing to maintain the navy in the highest possible state of efficiency, considers it to be the duty of the dominions beyond the seas to make such contributions towards the upkeep of the navy as may be determined by their local legislatures—the contributions to take the form of a grant of money, the establishment of local naval defence, or such other services, in such manner as may be decided upon after consultation with the Admiralty and as would best accord with varying circumstances."

There were many reason why for my part I could not agree to this motion, but the one reason which is germane to the present discussion is—and I alluded to it the other evening—that it was drawing immediately this young nation into the military and naval system of Great Britain, and for reasons which I shall state later on I thought that should not be done. Last year, you remember, I was the subject of much obloquy from gentlemen from the other side for the stand I took on that occasion. I heard hon. gentlemen of the opposition say that it was a sad and humiliating day for Canada when the Prime Minister had refused to vote for the motion of Dr. Smartt.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. My hon. friends opposite cheer too soon, and in a moment I shall tell them why. I did not take any notice of these statements at the time; I was not at all disturbed by the obloquy cast upon me for I knew I was in the right and I knew the time would come when the position I had then taken would be justified even on the floor of this House. And, Sir, that day has come; it has come sooner than I expected; it came the other day when the leader of the opposition moved his motion and when he made the speech he then made. I owe a debt of gratitude to my hon. friend the leader of the opposition for having adopted as he did the ideas which I presented on that occasion, and which I reaffirm to-day. I do not know that I should thank my hon. friend (Mr. R. L. Borden) for his good intentions; I do not think there was any good intent there, but I tender him the deepest expression of my gratitude for his action, and now I shall quote his own very words and point out to him in what respect I owe him that gratitude, and in what way he has adopted the very policy which I advocated in 1902 and in 1907. When my hon. friend moved his motion he indulged in a very natural supposition for him, for he talked of what he would do if he were in office. He has long been thinking of that I know, and perhaps he may have to think of it for some time to come, but at all events it

is quite in order that he should review these public questions from the point of view of his holding the office and the responsibility which now rests upon my poor shoulders. The hon. gentleman (Mr. R. L. Borden) said :

"So far as I am concerned, it seems to me that our plain course and duty would be this: The government of this country are able to understand and know, if they take the proper action for that purpose, whether the conditions which face the empire at this time in respect of naval defence are grave or not. If we were in power we would endeavour to find that out, to get a plain, unvarnished answer to that question, and if the answer to that question, based upon the report of the government of the mother country and of the naval experts of the Admiralty were such—and I think it would be such—as to demand instant and effective action by this country, then I would appeal to parliament for immediate and effective aid, and if parliament did not give immediate and effective aid I would appeal to the people of this country."

Noble sentiments. I have not a word to say against them; wise sentiments, wise policy. Does not my hon. friend the leader of the opposition here tell us that if he were in office he would not have rushed to offer two Dreadnoughts as he did last year. Now, my hon. friends on the other side of the House, it is time for them to cheer. Last year my hon. friend the leader of the opposition, without information, without knowing in the least what was the condition of affairs, rushed in and asked parliament to vote $25,000,000 to purchase Dreadnoughts for an emergency. The hon. gentleman did not know whether or not there was an emergency, but he rushed into it, and his followers voted with him. But to-day the leader of the opposition tells these same followers in so many words that they should not have taken his advice of last year, and that he should have consulted the authorities to know whether or not there was an emergency. Well, we knew there was no emergency, and therefore we voted against the contribution which was advocated by my non. friend. Surely my hon. friend the leader of the opposition is not tender to his followers in this, but that is no concern of mine. Then, speaking upon the general question of the naval policy, the leader of the opposition goes on to say :

"I think the question of Canada's co-operation upon a permanent basis in imperial defence involves very large and wide considerations. If Canada and the other dominions of the empire are to take their part as nations of this empire in the defence of the empire as a whole, shall it be that we, contributing to that defence of the whole empire, shall have absolutely, as citizens of this country, no voice whatever in the councils of the empire relating to the choice of peace or war throughout the empire ?"

Noble sentiments again, wise advice again. When I was in London in 1902 representing in my humble way and to the limits of my poor ability, Canada, my country, and when we were asked to launch into this imperial armament, I thought like my hon. friend the leader of the opposition :

"That the question of Canada's co-operation upon a permanent basis in imperial defence involves very large and wide considerations,"

And I thought also that :

"We should not contribute to that defence of the whole empire while we as citizens of that country have absolutely no voice whatever in the councils of the empire relating to the choice of peace or war throughout the empire."

To again use the words of the leader of the opposition. And that is exactly what I did. Now, hon. gentlemen opposite, is the time for you to cheer. I am happy to say that upon this very question, if defence I needed, but defence I need not, I have my defence in the words coming from the lips of the leader of the opposition; that under present circumstances it is not advisable for Canada to mix in the armaments of the empire, but that we should stand on our own policy of being masters in our own house, of having a policy for our own purpose, and leaving to the Canadian parliament, to the Canadian government, and to the Canadian people to take part in these wars in which to-day they have no voice, only, if they think fit to do so. This is the policy which we have presented.

It is not my habit to offer any counsel to my friends on the other side of the House, but may I be permitted to read on this occasion the advice which is given to them by one of their best friends in Canada. If there is one paper to-day in the Dominion of Canada which ranks higher than another for its temperate discussion of public affairs it is the Montreal 'Gazette.' The Montreal 'Gazette' is not a supporter of the Liberal party; it is one of the strong pillars of the Conservative party, but it always discusses public questions fearlessly and in the light of sound reason. This is what I read in an article published in the Montreal 'Gazette' a few days ago :

"In the matter of the navy, or the beginning of the navy, the case is simple. Pro-

vision for the protection of the country is a necessity of the world's conditions. It would have to be made and paid for no matter what Canada's political affiliations. It is something to be regarded as a duty, not as a matter of hurrah or political profit or partisan zeal. And there is no difference in principle between defence by sea and defence by land. If these things are forgotten in the discussions of the next few months, and any important section of the opposition sets aside its wholesome party traditions to join in what seems to be a big noise, then again will a promising chance of success be thrown away."

I will now part company with the hon. leader of the opposition. Let me come to my friend the member for Jacques Cartier. In his speech the other day, which I will not undertake to review in toto, because a large part of it is of a character which I do not feel called upon to answer, here is what my hon. friend said, speaking of the election in Drummond and Arthabaska :

"I believe that no less a sum than $50,000 was expended by my right hon. friend's party."

This is said in a speech which is meant to be serious. When a man of the position of my hon. friend from Jacques Cartier makes such a statement, he says too much or he does not say enough. It is not sufficient to say, 'I believe that the sum of $50,000 was expended by the right hon. gentleman's party.' I might say that I believe that a sum equal to that was spent by the Nationalist party. If my non. friend were to ask me what is my authority for the statement, I would say I have none, no more than he has. There is just as much truth in the one statement as in the other. These things, Sir, are not meant for grave discussion, and I have to ask the House's pardon for having spent a minute of its time in alluding to such an inane assertion. But I come to something more serious. In my hon. friend's speech—and this is the part I intend to review—my hon. friend made use of these words—big words :

"On the one hand we have, as I hope to be able to show presently, a misrepresentation of our attitude and our policy on the facts of the case by the Prime Minister."

A misrepresentation—this is big language. I doubt if it is parliamentary. But I did not call your attention to it, Sir, at the time, nor do I intend to call your attention to it at this moment. I noticed it at the time, but I was eager to follow my hon. friend to the end of his speech. I listened to him attentively, because this was not the first time that my hon. friend had stated that I had misrepresented facts in regard to this naval policy. In many speeches delivered in the province of Quebec I had read the same words. I was anxious to know, and till the other day I never did understand what my hon. friend meant when he stated that I had misrepresented certain facts with regard to the naval policy, and concealed something which I should have disclosed. My hon. friend, but not so much he as the leader of the party in Quebec, made the statement more than once that there has been a conspiracy in this matter between His Excellency the Governor General and myself. Now, Sir, I am here to answer my hon. friend to-day. I understand now what he means; I have read his speech carefully. My hon. friend contends, when he says that we have misguided the House and have kept something hidden, that on the 10th of February, 1909, an order in council was passed approving a plan which had previously been rejected by the Canadian ministers at the conference of 1908, and which pledged Canada to participate in the military armaments of Great Britain, that that order was passed in secret, was kept concealed for a long time, and was so concealed when the naval policy of the government was brought before the House. In order to do no injustice to my hon. friend, I will quote his very words and leave the House to judge between him and me in this matter. The House can then judge for itself what value is to be attached to the words of my hon. friend. In his speech, after having reviewed the conference of 1902 and the conference of 1907 and after having given me a meed of praise for my attitude at both of those conferences, which almost brought a blush to my cheeks, saying that he approved of almost everything that I had done as representing Canada, my hon. friend went on as follows :

"I am not aware that in the elections of 1908 or at any time—I speak subject to correction—his conduct in that respect was called into question. How can we explain the attitude of my right hon. friend subsequently ? Through all the negotiations from beginning to end something seems to be hidden. Let me call the attention of the House to what happened in 1909. My right hon. friend claimed that everything has been above board. But in 1909, the question never having been submitted to this House or to the people, while we were sitting here in the month of February, an order in council was passed, which will be found on Paper 99, of the Sessional Papers of 1909 :

"Return to an address calling for a copy of orders in council, correspondence, letters, despatches, memoranda and communications, between the imperial and the Canadian governments relating to the organization of an imperial general staff.

"In 1909, on the 10th of February, after having had previously, at the conference of 1907, refused to accede to the proposal

of the War Office for a military organization, when the House, I say, was in session, when we were here ready to speak on behalf of the people, an order in council was passed which is quoted in these documents, absolutely approving of the military plans of the War Office, and directing that a telegram should be sent to London in these terms :

"Your despatch, Canada, 30, January 15. My ministers fully accept the principles set forth in memorandum by general staff. Despatch will follow explaining precise position of Dominion government.'

"Now I would like to ask the House how it is that a plan which had been previously made and had been refused by my right hon. friend, should, when the House is sitting on the 10th of February, 1909, by an order in council, without consultation with the House in any way, receive the sanction of the government ?"

Again, Sir, I have to thank my hon. friend for the unqualified approval which he gave to my attitude at the conference of 1907; but I take issue with him in his reproach when he said that I had departed from the principle I had maintained at that conference. My hon. friend approved what I did at the conference of 1907, and he approved therefore this resolution which was passed by that conference and which is to be found in the book entitled 'General Staff Service of the Empire.' That resolution is as follows :

"That this conference welcomes and cordially approves the exposition of general principles embodied in the statement of the Secretary of State for War, and, without wishing to commit any of the governments represented, recognizes and affiirms the need of developing for the service of the empire a general staff, selected from the forces of the empire as a whole, which shall study military science in all its branches, shall collect and disseminate to the various governments military information and intelligence, shall undertake the preparation of schemes of defence on a common principle, and, without in the least interfering in questions connected with command and administration, shall, at the request of the respective governments, advise as to the training, education, and war organization of the military forces of the Crown in every part of the empire."

This met with the approval of my hon. friend and the scheme which was possed provided that the general staff should simply collect intelligence to be distributed among the different nations of the empire and in no way provided that it should participate in the maelstrom of militarism in Europe.

I am not afraid of any invasion of Canada, at all events of eastern Canada, but I am not so sure that we can leave unguarded the province of British Columbia or the western shore of the Pacific ocean. I am not afraid of any danger of war between Great Britain and the United States. Their civilization is too much advanced to contemplate anything of the kind, and they have too many interests in common to warrant it. Each of these nations looks upon war as the curse of civilization. But on the Pacific ocean, where we have for our neighbours Russia, Japan and China, when we have in these countries a vast humanity, seething in the formation of a new civilization, it would be folly to say that danger of war is not at all to be apprehended in that quarter. For my part, I entertain no such view, and I do not think it behooves Canada to look, under all circumstances, to Great Britain for the protection of our Pacific coast. If there should be an invasion, does not my hon. friend think that we should have troops and a navy to repel it and that the best instruction possible should be given to our officers? Does not common sense demand that if we are to repel invasion at any time, that if our troops are to fight for the defence of the country—and my hon. friend knows they can only be called on for the defence of this country—then our system of organization should be absolutely the same as that of the British Empire.

Upon the plan which was suggested for the formation of a general staff, certain things were to be done. Read the conclusions of the paper proposed as a basis of reorganization. They are as follows :

To sum up, the following seem the main points requiring attention at the present moment, in order to lay the foundation of an imperial general staff :

1. All the forces of the empire to be organized for war on the same general principles, especially as regards the system of command and staff duties. For this purpose the formation of the imperial general staff should be proceeded with as far as the present available means permit.

II. Uniformity to be ensured in the system of training officers for the general staff by arranging for—

(a) Uniformity in the system of educating regimental officers from whom selections for the staff colleges are made. This is to be secured by recognizing the Staff College at Camberley as the central school of military education for the empire, and by filling at the outset, to such extent as may be approved by the respective government of the oversea dominions, the most important instructional appointments by Camberley graduates.

(b) Uniformity in the system of selection of regimental officers for staff college courses.

(c) Uniformity in the entrance examinations, curriculum, syllabus, and teaching at the several staff colleges.

III. Uniformity in the carrying out of staff duties, to be attained by encouraging graduates of the staff colleges, who aspire to holding the more imporant general staff appointments, to undergo a further course of training in England or India; and by arranging for a systematic interchange of officers of the Imperial General Staff between the various appointments throughout the empire.

Mr. MONK. Does the right hon. gentleman think that that was a matter for parliament to decide ?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. I shall come to that presently. Parliament can decide and can recall our action, but that is not the point. The point I make against my hon. friend is that in his speech here the other day, and in his speeches at Quebec, he said that we accepted a plan whereby our forces were to participate in the wars of Great Britain. My hon. friend says that that was a plan for parliament to decide upon, but what prevented him from bringing the matter before parliament? He said that we kept it secret, and that it was kept secret when we introduced our naval policy. Whether it was secret at that time or not does not matter. It was not a matter which concerns our naval policy, but our militia. What does my hon. friend mean ?

Mr. MONK. The right hon. gentleman asked me a question. My objection was that that plan was not submitted to parliament which was sitting at the time.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. My point is not with reference to the publication of the order in council, but to the passing of that order. Does my hon. friend not know that every member of the Privy Council is sworn to secrecy, that the first oath taken by a privy councillor is to keep secret what transpires in the council. Does he not know that all orders in council are passed in secret and that the members of the Privy Council can only be released from secrecy by His Excellency the Governor General on the advice of the government ? In this case the order was released by His Excellency. My hon. friend said that it was not communicated to parliament. The other day speaking of the speech delivered by my hon. colleague, the Minister of Finance, (Mr. Fielding), he said :

"That statement which I now make can be verified. Mr. Speaker, the agreements arrived at of a military nature were more sweeping because at that time we did not know what was contained in that secret order in council passed on the 10th of February 1909, which was only laid on the table of this House long after."

When I heard these words, I must confess I was dumbfounded, and when I read them later I was still more astonished. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) spoke on the 20th April, 1907. My hon. friend tells us that at that 2time the order in council, which was passed on the 10th February, 1909, had not been laid before the House. Sir, it was moved for on the 22nd February 1909 :

"Return to an address to His Excellency the Governor General dated the 22nd February, 1909, calling for a copy of orders in council, correspondence, letters and despatches, memoranda and communications, between the Imperial and Canadian governments relating to the organization of an imperial general staff."

And that order was passed by the House on February 22, 1909, and was complied with when? We had brought in our policy, and Mr. Fielding had spoken, after the order was brought and laid upon the table of this House, on March 5, 1909. I could not believe that the leader of a party could be guilty of such levity. I went to the clerk and asked him to tell me when the order had been brought down, and I have it in his own handwriting—March 5, 1909. Sir, it is with such accusations that my hon. friend has met us in the province of Quebec, speaking to his fellow-countrymen and mine, declaring that I had been guilty of a conspiracy, that I had kept something hidden from the House, something of which he did not know and in the keeping back of which there was some mysterious intent. It is with such fabrications that he has been trying to poison the minds of the people of our province. 'Misrepresentations,' says the hon. gentleman. Yes, there were misrepresentations, but not on my part.

One word more, and I have done. And perhaps the House will forgive me if, in this last word, I take the opportunity of speaking of my own career. It is now twenty-two years that I have been the leader of the Liberal party, and during these twenty-two years we have had what we may claim to be a measure of support in all the provinces. At the present time we have a majority in six provinces out of nine— Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Saskat-

chewan and Alberta. I am free to say that the province of Quebec has always given this government its chief support. May I not make an open confession and speak with perfect freedom and candour on the present occasion. 'Blood is thicker than water,'—that is not a French saying; it is an English saying. Blood is thicker than water even in the English provinces. It may be that in the province of Quebec there are men who have given their support to the party with which I am allied because I am of their race. And I may say that, similarly, there may be men who have given their support to my hon. friend opposite (Mr. R. L. Borden) because he was one of their race. But, so far as I am concerned, my endeavor has always been to keep the policy of the party upon lines which would appeal to the conscience of all races and all creeds. At the present time there is in my own province a certain section of my own fellow countrymen—Nationalists they are called to-day—who have seceded from my party and from myself because I have endeavored at all times to maintain that policy which would appeal to no creed or race as such, a policy of moderation. There are, as I have said, certain men, certain young men, who have separated themselves from me for this reason. I have no reproach to make. There are men within my hearing to-night who know that, years ago, I told them that I expected such a thing. For I know that human nature is about what it has always been. If I may, without presumption, compare my historical self to historical personages, I could find many precedents for such a thing as is occurring in the province of Quebec. If there was one man who did more than another for Irishmen, that man was Daniel O'Connell. He it was who led in the successful effort to remove the shackles which the penal laws had imposed upon his fellow Irishmen. The day came, however, when he was attacked by some young enthusiasts who thought his policy too moderate. His policy was to ask for the repeal of the Union and for the re-establishment of an Irish parliament upon College Green. But there were certain enthusiasts— the young Irish party they called themselves—who thought this policy too moderate and preached complete separation from Great Britain. However, this party did not go very far. The inanity of their policy was soon found out. And many of them, I am glad to say, lived to recant their former opinions. And the policy followed to-day by these young men in the province of Quebec will not go far either. The naval policy of the government is a policy broad in its conception, a policy Canadian and not sectional. It may meet with defeat here and there, but this will not affect my courage. We will go on to the end, for we know we are in the right and that the right will prevail.